

Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy

Volume 0 *NCSCBHEP Proceedings 2007*

Article 18

April 2007

Unions & Faculty Senates: A Cross-Case Analysis of Governance within Private Universities

Carlene Blake

Fordham University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba>

Recommended Citation

Blake, Carlene (2007) "Unions & Faculty Senates: A Cross-Case Analysis of Governance within Private Universities," *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*: Vol. 0 , Article 18.
Available at: <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol0/iss2/18>

This Proceedings Material is brought to you for free and open access by The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy by an authorized editor of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

UNIONS AND FACULTY SENATES: A CROSS-CASE
ANALYSIS OF GOVERNANCE WITHIN
PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Carlene Blake-Hudson

Department of Educational Leadership Administration and Policy

Fordham University

Paper Presented at the 34th Annual National Conference for the National Center for the
Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions

New York, NY

April 15 - 17, 2007

Abstract

Academic governance within higher education is a complex decision-making process that creates college and university policies and actions. The interactions between faculty senates, unions, and administrators have been explored by a number of models, including collegial, bureaucratic, and political models, as well as senate structures, but little data is available for private universities.

The governance process was examined at two private universities: Adelphi and Hofstra. A semistructured interview was constructed to answer questions concerning perceptions of the senate, faculty union, governance, leadership styles, and power structures. Thirty participants, 15 from each university, were interviewed. Interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method, which allows the extraction of themes and categories for cross-case comparisons.

The analysis showed that while half the participants perceived the senate as traditional at both universities, participants were equally divided at Hofstra on its effectiveness, whereas at Adelphi, there was a perception of bureaucracy and power concentration on the part of the upper administration. At Hofstra, the majority opinion concerning the union suggested it was strong and effective, and the relationship between the senate and union good. Similar findings were noted at Adelphi with the exception that the union-senate relationship had been intimate, but had begun separation since the ouster of a recent president. While no particular governance style model was identified at Hofstra, the observation at Adelphi was one of bureaucracy, buttressed by the finding that most of the power resides in the administration. The perception of shared

governance appeared to be stronger at Hofstra than Adelphi, and most participants at Hofstra agreed the university was like a family, with its leaders focused on fundraising and academics. By contrast, respect and listening was identified as the leadership style at Adelphi. Despite these differences, the majority of participants at both universities identified themselves as content.

This study suggests that administrators must understand that faculty, union, and senate members want to be a part of the governance process, yet receive trust and respect from the administration. A combination of collegiality, co-optation, and control appear to have been successful in obtaining shared governance with the presence of both a union and senate.

Statement of Problem

Private colleges are an integral part of higher education. They serve every stratum of this society—from America's most elite and gifted, to the older, nontraditional student. Since local and federal laws are somewhat different for private colleges than they are for state and city colleges, this study focused on relationships that emerge with administrators, faculty senates, and unionized faculty within private universities, and the impact these relationships bring to bear on the universities' governance structures, specifically within two private universities in New York state, Adelphi University and Hofstra University.

Unionization and collective bargaining in higher education can be traced in labor history as far back as the late 1800s (Holley, Jennings, & Wolters, 2005; Pride, Hughes, & Kapoor, 2005; Spring, 2002). Issues of governance and leadership roles always have been of concern to colleges and universities, and moreover, Rhoades (1998) suggests that the types of colleges and universities that are most likely to unionize are often overlooked in the higher education literature. Unionization has been a strategy for some college faculty not simply to increase wages, but also to enhance the collective faculty's voice in college and university governance (Ehrenberg, 2004; Rhoades, 1998).

The study examined the following problem: When a campus has both a faculty senate and a union, what areas do each influence? Further, what are the factors that promote or diminish conflict among the union, the senate, and the administration?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are intended to help comparable institutions. They will assist administrators in creating policies and procedures that enhance quality governance with the presence of unions and senates.

First, the study may provide some insights for leaders responsible for the development of governance policy, and help frame the structure and processes by which campus decisions are made with unions and senates. This has significant consequences for the health of the institutions. Second, the results are of particular value to those colleges in the Northeast or western parts of the United States that maintain high numbers of unionized college and university faculties. With the rise of other unionized constituents on college and university campuses, knowledge of the coexisting groups is useful. Third, the successful governance of a college or university can only enhance the learning outcomes for the students. Finally, the study, by identifying achievable patterns of success, will offer role models that might provide some relief for troubled institutions. Although each school is a separate and unique institution, this study attempted to uncover administrative patterns that could be adapted by many private colleges and universities.

Review of Significant Literature

The literature related to this study explored four influences on faculty unionization and governance, as well as the theoretical rationales: (a) historical perspectives that precipitated change, (b) perceptions of unionization by the professoriate, (c) governance structures in colleges and universities, and (d) external and internal structural changes that caused a divided mission between some administrators and

professors. In summarizing the literature, the historical events that led to the expansion and the decline of unionization in America were discussed (Goldey, 1997; Mills, 2002; Zieger, 1988; Pride et al., 2005). Then a brief history of higher education linked unionization to higher education and the professoriate's perception of unionization (Lucas, 1994; Patterson, 2000; Rudolph, 1990; Thelin, 2004). Finally, the many external and internal events that caused opposition between administrators and professors were reviewed ((DeCew, 2003; Goldey, 1997; Newfield, 2003).

Methodology

Both institutions have senates and a unionized faculty. The issues addressed in this research were participants' perceptions of good leadership practices, the nature of the governance structure at the institutions; the degree to which the senate, the administration, and the faculty worked well together, as well as which of these groups had the greater power.

A cross-case study design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest was in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, and in discovery rather than a confirmation (Merriam, 1998). According to Becker (1968) the purposes of a case study are twofold, to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study and to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process. Process, as a focus for case study, can be viewed as monitoring or explanation of cause (Merriam, 1998). The advantages of description in a case study can illustrate the complexities of a situation, show the influences of personalities on an issue, detail

differences of opinion on an issue and suggest how these differences have influenced the results, and finally, present information in a wide variety of ways.

The semi-structured interview approach allowed the researcher to be guided by relevant questions while integrating “a flexible strategy of discovery” in order to attain rich, detailed information from interviewees (Mishler, 1986, p. 27). The interview protocol explored the participants’ experiences at the respective university, and allowed the participant to guide the discussion in areas that he or she was knowledgeable about, or in some instances was comfortable discussing. Confidentiality was assured in several ways during the study. Interviews were assigned numbers during initial interviews and subsequent data organization. In addition, interviews were conducted in situations in which privacy could be assured to allow participants the ability to honestly express themselves. Confidentiality was maintained within the text findings and discussions to disguise individuals who might be easily identifiable.

In addition to the interview data, document analysis was performed. Documents from both universities included: collective bargaining agreements, grievances that might have gone to arbitration, senate bylaws, and any available senate policies or statutes. The data was analyzed to discern the structure, functions, operational practices, and perceptions concerning the academic senates, and collective bargaining from the perspectives of faculty members, senate members, union stewards, and college administrators. It was hoped that the responses and document summaries would shed light on the status of the governance roles of academic senates that coexist with collective bargaining units.

Findings

While the case studies upheld many of the previous research findings regarding perceptions of senates and unions in the governance process of higher education institutions, some significant evidence did emerge in how leaders and administrators manage the governance process. This study revealed that an administrative style will clearly impact the governance relationships regarding union, senate, and faculty members. As evidenced by the two cases, a theory of collegiality, co-optation, or control framed the working relationship in the governance process and what is accomplished. If the theory is referred to as the 3 Cs, each has its strengths and weaknesses. True collegiality will evoke trust and respect, but too much collegiality might be perceived as weakness on the part of administrators as well as union leaders. Co-optation as used in the past, and used at present, can create win-win situations and a pleasant environment, although some might see co-optation as a form of manipulation by management. Finally, control is needed to maintain order and structure. However, educated professionals and leaders in their disciplines prefer to be consulted.

Implications for Research and Practice

Additional research might study public universities and their governance experiences, as well as other governance experiences in private colleges in other states. Moreover, quantitative studies could be used to study this phenomenon.

The implication for practice regarding this study could add to the importance of leaders managing change, power perception on university campuses, collective bargaining in higher education, and shared governance.

References

- Becker, H. S. (1968). *Writing for social scientists*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- DeCew, J. W. (2003). *Unionization in the academy: Visions and realities*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Ehrenberg, R. G. (Ed.). (2004). *Governing academia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Goldey, G. (1997). The determinants of community college faculty attitudes toward Unionization (Doctoral dissertation, the University of Oklahoma, 1997). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 60, 11A.
- Holley, W. H., Jennings, K. M., & Wolters, R. S. (2005). *The labor relations process* (8th ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western.
- Lucas, C. (1994). *American higher education: A history*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications on education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mills, C. W. (2002). *White Collar: The American middle classes*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1951)
- Mishler, E. G. (1986). *Research interviewing: Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Newfield, C. (2003). *Ivy and industry: Business and the making of the American university, 1880-1980*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Patterson, J. (2000). *America in the twentieth century—A history*. New York, NY: Harcourt College Publishers.

Pride, W. M., Hughes, R. J., & Kapoor, J. R. (2005). *Business* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Rhoades, G. (1998). *Managed professionals: Unionized faculty and restructuring academic labor*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Rudolph, F. (1990). *American college and university: A history*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Thelin, J. (2004). *A history of American higher education*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Zieger, R. H. (1988). *John L. Lewis: Labor leader*. Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers.